

## **California Courts News Transcript**

Title: New Contra Costa Courthouse Almost Complete

Date: Sept 3, 2010

---

The brand new 72-thousand square foot courthouse in Pittsburg is almost complete. Move in is scheduled for the end of October, right on schedule. They can't wait.

Hon. Steven Austin, Contra Costa Superior Court *"The old building is just a travesty. The heat doesn't work, it's either too hot or too cold, smoke comes out of the vents, and the toilets back up."*

It is old, way too small, and customer services are very limited. Folks in east Contra Costa County are about to get a full service courthouse, including the addition of a self service center and a juvenile calendar. A drive to Martinez will no longer be necessary.

Hon. Steven Austin *"Could be an hour or more to get into Martinez in the morning, and that's really difficult for many of our families."*

There'll be 7 courtrooms, including one large enough to hold the big crowds in traffic court.

Hon. Steven Austin *"And the people who come in to traffic are going to get respect by having a nice place to come in and handle their matters."*

There'll be 15 stations to handle public transactions, backed up by clerical work areas that promote efficiency. The public waiting area will have a snack bar, and tables and chairs with a view of the East Bay hills; an island of tranquility.

Hon. Steven Austin *"To have some place for people to go to kind of relax a little bit, to calm down, is going to help me as a judge."*

The jury assembly room is situated outside of security so it can be available after hours for public gatherings.

Hon. Steven Austin *"It's a community meeting place in many ways and they're trying to design it that way, both the exterior and the interior."*

Double pane windows let in lots of light, but not the sun's heat. Security will be top notch within the building and around the site. This is the control center where the entire complex will be monitored. Down the hallway are holding cells for in-custody juveniles and adults. And there are secure private meeting rooms.

Hon. Steven Austin *"It's going to make things run so much more smoothly, having these kind of facilities here, lots of places for defense attorneys to meet with their clients."*

## **California Courts News Transcript**

There's a secure sally port for buses from the jail. And the judges will have secure parking – which they don't have in the old building.

Hon. Steven Austin *"We've had some problems with people coming up to us, as we're getting into our cars, sticky situation."*

There'll be plenty of staff and public parking, too; altogether a user-friendly complex.

Hon. Steven Austin *"It's built in a way that I think everyone's going to be proud of when they see it. This is a place where people are going to want to come to work, a place where people are going to want to come in and take care of their business. It's going to work wonderfully for everyone."*

Two other new courthouses are currently underway, in Mammoth Lakes and Susanville – plus a major renovation in Fresno. And 50 other court building projects throughout the state are in various stages of planning – with 6 more groundbreakings scheduled for the next 12 months. It's one of the largest public works programs in the country – about 6-point-5 billion dollars, coming mostly from user fees and fines; creating thousands of jobs, stimulating local economies, and improving safety and access to justice for Californians.

I'm Leanne Kozak reporting for California Courts News.

[END]